# Heavenly gate – brief version

Vaikuntha Ekadashi is a significant Hindu festival dedicated to Lord Vishnu, observed on the 11th day of the Shukla Paksha in the month of Margashirsha (December-January). It is believed that fasting on this day opens the gates of Vaikuntha (heavenly abode) and absolves devotees of their sins, granting them liberation from the cycle of birth and death.

**Legends and Significance:**

- The origin is traced to the legend of Vishnu's female energy, Ekadashi, slaying the demon Muran.
- Observing Vaikuntha Ekadashi is considered equivalent to fasting on all other 23 Ekadashis of the year.
- Vaishnavas believe the 'Vaikuntha Dwaram' opens on this day, providing access to Vishnu's inner sanctum.

**Rituals and Observances:**

- Devotees observe a strict fast, avoiding grains and certain foods. Some undertake a complete fast, while others consume only fruits and milk.
- Special prayers, chanting of Vishnu's name (Japa), meditation (Dhyana), and night vigils (Jagaran) are common practices.
- Visiting Vishnu temples, especially those with a Vaikuntha Dwaram, is considered highly auspicious.

**Celebrations:**

- Major celebrations occur at Venkateswara temples, especially in Srirangam and Tirupati.
- The Srirangam temple celebrates a 20-day festival with special rituals and the opening of the Paramapada Vasal.
- The Tirumala Venkateswara Temple opens the Vaikunta Dwaram, drawing large crowds.

**Practices:**

- Fasting, prayer and staying awake through the night, singing nama sankirtan are the main practices of the festival.
- Playing the game of paramapadam is also done to show that ego is the snake that will pull us down, while ladder (purity of heart) will help climb the ladder to moksha.

Vaikuntha Ekadashi promotes spiritual purification, devotion, and the attainment of moksha through various rituals and observances.